

**THE TEGEMEO INSTITUTE CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURAL
COMPETITIVENESS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND POVERTY
REDUCTION ON 24th March 2003**

Opening speech by:

Prof. Ezra K. Maritim

Vice-Chancellor Egerton University.

The Minister for Agriculture Hon Kipruto Arap Kirwa, the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. Joseph Kinyua, USAID/Kenya Mission Director, Dr. Kiertisak Toh, Director of Agriculture, Dr. Joseph Wanjama, Director of Livestock Production Mr. Julius Kiptarus, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Chairpersons of departments present, Director and staff of Tegemeo institute, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentleman.

I welcome you all to this conference on Agricultural Competitiveness for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction. The increasing regional and international trade have increased challenges to developing countries like Kenya to remain competitive in its production of food and cash crops. This conference therefore comes at a time when the government is implementing new economic recovery strategy and that of revitalization of agriculture. There new challenges therefore raise demand for empirical policy research and analysis that informs the implementation of the new strategies. Tegemeo Institute has thus taken up these challenges as is witnessed by the conference today.

I wish to thank USAID through Dr. Kiertisak Toh, the mission Director for their support in Agriculture Policy analysis in the country through Tegemeo institute. This support has contributed to the policy reform debate has also guided agricultural policy formulation in the country. We urge you to continue supporting us in this important area of our economy.

On its part, the institute through the university is strategising with a view to expanding its resource base and increasing its research capacity. The institute is also studying new ways of expanding its resource base to ensure the sustainability of Agricultural policy analysis in Kenya Towards this end, the Institute will explore more ways of tapping the existing expertise in the university to expand its areas of interests in other areas such as Natural

Resource Management and other productive sector in the economy outside agriculture.

The institute is also exploring new ways of increasing local capacity in policy research and analysis through increased linkages with local and overseas universities and in working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries and the ministry of Cooperative Development and Marketing. Towards this end, I wish to thank USAID for supporting us train at the masters and PhD level. Currently USAID through the TAMPA project is supporting four PhDs and four Masters students and one master degree for the Ministry of Agriculture.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Ministry of Agriculture for your continued support and collaboration with us in many fields. In need, Tegemeo has been appointed to help in the preparation of the Economic Recovery Strategy and the Strategy for Revitalization of Agriculture. The Institute has also been called upon to participate in the coffee and Sugar task forces. We look forward to even further collaboration as the strategies get implemented.

It is my pleasure to invite you to address the gathering and officially open the Conference.

Thank You.